

قواعد في التعامل مع العلماء

PRINCIPLES

IN DEALING WITH THE

SCHOLARS

SHAYKH IBRAHIM AL-MAZRUI

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Introduction

All praise belongs to Allah lord, of all that exists may the prayers in the peace be upon the seal of the prophets, upon his family, and all of his companions.

And I bear witness that none has the right to be worshiped alone without partners except Allah and I bear witness that Muhammad is His servant and messenger as to what follows.

Written by:
***As-Shaykh Ibrahim
bin Abdillah Al-
Mazrouii***

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«إِنَّ الْعُلَمَاءَ هُمْ وَرَثَةُ الْأَنْبِيَاءِ».

“Indeed, the scholars are the inheritors of the prophets...”⁽¹⁾

Therefore the scholars are inheritors of the messenger of Allah. Those who establish within this nation, the duty of conveying (the message), teaching, directing, and clarifying the limits of the lawful and unlawful. So with this being the case, it is an obligation upon this nation to obey them in (that which is) obedience to Allah and to love them, respect them, and seek them out and take (knowledge) from them. And upon this were our righteous predecessors, may the pleasure of Allah be upon them.



(1) Musnad Ahmad, No. (21715), and it is mentioned by Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah and others, and it was authenticated by Al-Albani in Sahih Al-Jami' No. (6292).

قَوَاعِدُ فِي التَّعَامُلِ مَعَ الْعُلَمَاءِ

Principles in dealing with the Scholars

Written by:

***As-Shaykh Ibrahim
bin Abdillah Al-
Mazrouii***

The people in terms of their view of the scholars are into different categories:

- People who view the scholars like everyone else, and that they don't have any value or status, so (these people) are astray, and lead others astray, and they have divided their religion into groups and parties.

- Other people who have sanctified the scholars, raised them above their stature and blindly follow them in the absolute sense, while rejecting the legislative text.
- Others who see that the scholars have a status and value, but they don't deal with them in the correct manner, in which the righteous predecessors were upon.
- People who are upon guidance and uprightness. They know the status of the scholars and they deal with them in the correct legislative manner and they follow the way of their righteous predecessors in dealing with the scholar as will be addressed.

Therefore, what is the correct manner of dealing with the scholars? And why are we speaking of the subject of dealing with the scholars?

(We do so) In order for us to know the status of the Scholars and islam, and their virtue upon this nation, (We do so) in order for us to increase in diligence upon seeking knowledge and elevate in its paths so we can be from them and reach their high level.

(We do so) to join the word (unity) of the Muslims, for indeed the path of unity is adhering to the Book, and the sunnah and the body of the Muslims and the scholars are the ones who attest to that.

So, if we treat them according to their status and adhere to their words, unity and harmony will be achieved.

(We do so) to get to know a group of the people of knowledge, and this will be an incentive (for us) to love them, be loyal to them, and mention them frequently.

And also, because many Muslims are ignorant of how to deal with their scholars, and with the purpose of encouraging the pursuit of knowledge. (So we should ask this question)

Who are the scholars that we intend here?

- The scholars are those who are knowledgeable of the legislation of Allah; those who have gained understanding in His religion and work by their knowledge upon guidance and insight.
- The scholars are the Fuqahā (jurists) whose words, religious verdicts revolve around, amongst the people.
- The scholars are the group from amongst this nation that has gone forth to gain understanding in the religion

of Allah, then established the obligation of calling (to Allah ﷻ).

- The scholars are the noted personalities of the ummah; they are the people of the sunnah and the Jamaa'ah; (they are) the followers of the righteous predecessors.

- As for the people of innovation and misguidance and those who take knowledge as a profession and employment and they make their livelihood based on it. They imitate the scholars in their clothing, appearance, and manner of speaking; these are common folk, who pretend to have knowledge and they are not from the scholars.

How are we acquainted with those who are scholars from those who are not?

Indications that point to the knowledge of a scholar and his virtue:

1 - The scholars are known by their knowledge and the firmness of their positions in areas of doubtful matters where interpretations deviate.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah said:

«إِنَّ الراسخ في العلم لو وَرَدَتْ عليه من الشُّبه بعدد أمواج البحر ما أزالَت يقينَهُ، لأنَّه قد رسخ في العلم فلا تستفزُّه الشبهات، بل إذا وردت عليه رَدَّها حرسُ العلم وجيشُهُ».

“Indeed, the well-grounded (scholar) in knowledge, if doubts numbering the waves of the sea were presented to him, this would not remove his certainty, because he has become grounded in knowledge; And doubts will not provoke him, rather if they were presented to him, the guard of knowledge and its army would refute/reject them.”⁽²⁾

2 - The scholars are known for their striving and calling to Allah and the sacrificing of their time and efforts in the path of Allah.

3 - The scholars are known for their abstinence and fear of Allah.

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ﴾

“It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.”⁽³⁾

(2) The key to the abode of happiness (1/140).

(3) Surah Fatir - Verse: 28

4 - They are known for their elevation over the worldly life and its shares; The people know them by these qualities and other than this.

5 - And from that which the scholar is known for, is his teachers' testimony of knowledge for him. And the salaf were like this, as well as those who followed them with precision. They would not put themselves forward until they saw the affirmation of their teachers for them, attesting to their knowledge and permitting them with putting themselves forward, giving verdicts and teaching.

Imam Mālik رحمه الله said:

«لَا يَنْبَغِي لِرَجُلٍ أَنْ يَرَى نَفْسَهُ أَهْلًا لَشَيْءٍ حَتَّى يَسْأَلَ مَنْ كَانَ أَعْلَمَ مِنْهُ وَمَا أَفْتَيْتُ حَتَّى سَأَلْتُ رَبِيعَةَ وَيَحْيَى بْنَ سَعِيدٍ فَأَمَرَانِي بِذَلِكَ وَلَوْ نَهَانِي أَنْتَهَيْتُ».

“It is not befitting for a person to consider himself someone who is qualified to do a thing, until he asks someone who is more knowledgeable than him. And I did not give religious verdicts until I asked Rabee’ah and Yahya bin Sa’eed. They both ordered me to do so and had they prohibited me (from that), I would have stopped.”⁽⁴⁾

(4) The description of the fatwa and the questioner by Ibn Hamdan (p.8).

And he also said:

«ليس كُلُّ مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يَجْلِسَ فِي الْمَسْجِدِ لِلتَّحْدِيثِ وَالْفُتْيَا جَلَسَ،
حَتَّى يَشَاوِرَ فِيهِ أَهْلُ الصَّلَاحِ وَالْفَضْلِ، وَمَا جَلَسْتُ حَتَّى شَهِدَ لِي
سَبْعُونَ شَيْخاً مِنْ أَهْلِ الْعِلْمِ أَنِّي مُوضِعٌ لَذَلِكَ».

“Not everyone who likes to sit in the masjid to speak or give religious verdicts, should do so, until the people of uprightness and virtue are consulted regarding him. I did not sit (in front of the people) until seventy scholars from the people of knowledge bore witness of me being capable of that.”⁽⁵⁾

6 - And that which indicates the knowledge and virtue of a scholar is his lessons, verdicts and authored books.

These are some things that indicate the knowledge of a scholar. As for the positions (people assume) and other than this, is not an indication of having knowledge.

The difference between the scholars and those who imitate them:

(5) It was mentioned by Ibn Farhoun in Al-Dibaj (21).

A- The difference between scholars and reciters.

During this time, recitation has become widespread; and books and publications have become many and this has led to the presence of a group, who are reciters.

And the reciters are those who are good at reciting and they recite that which is written for them.

The prophet ﷺ clarified that they would appear during the last days. And he said in an authentic Hadeeth:

«سَيَأْتِي عَلَى أُمَّتِي زَمَانٌ يَكْثُرُ فِيهِ الْقُرَّاءُ، وَيَقِلُّ الْفُقَهَاءُ، وَيُقْبَضُ الْعِلْمُ، وَيَكْثُرُ الْهَرْجُ».

“There will come upon my nation a time when the reciters will become many and the scholars of fiqh (understanding) will become less and knowledge will go away and confusion will increase...”⁽⁶⁾

(6) Al-Mu'jam Al-Awsat by Al-Tabarani, No. (3277), and Al-Hakim reported it and authenticated it, and Al-Albani mentioned it in Al-Da'ifah, No. (1237)

And Shaykh Hamood at-Tuwayjri (May Allah have mercy upon him) said:

«وقد ظهر مصداق هذا الحديث في زماننا فقلَّ الفقهاء العارفون، وكثر القُرَّاء من الكبار والصغار والرجال والنساء، بسبب كثرة المدارس وانتشارها».

“The evidence (of the truth) of this Hadeeth has become apparent during this time of ours. The well-known scholars of understanding have become little (in number) and the reciters have become many; from the old, the young, the men, and the women, all because the many learning institutes and the spreading of them.”⁽⁷⁾

And Imam adh-Dhahabi said regarding them:

«قومٌ انتموا إلى العلم في الظاهر، ولم يتقنوا منه سوى نزرٍ يسيرٍ أو هموا به أنهم علماء».

“They are a people who affiliate themselves to knowledge outwardly, but they only master a small fraction of it, trying to convince others that they are scholars.”⁽⁸⁾

As for the scholar, he is one who possesses a general comprehensive understanding of Islam and an overall

(7) Ithaf Al-Jama'ah (1/418)

(8) Al-Siyar (7/153)

detailed understanding of Islamic rulings. He has (also) studied the Islamic sciences and has come across the issues of knowledge. He has become someone who has a command of understanding the texts and he knows the objectives of the legislation and its general goals.

B- The difference between the scholars and those who give sermons and advisors.

So not every person who gives a sermon is a scholar. How many people advise, capturing the hearts of the people with their good words and sweetness of their speech or logic, and they do not possess any portion of knowledge? Therefore, (having) knowledge is not defined by having the ability to speak well.

Ibn Mas'ūd رضي الله عنه said:

«إِنَّكُمْ فِي زَمَانٍ: كَثِيرٌ فَقَهَاؤُهُ، قَلِيلٌ خُطْبَاؤُهُ وَسَيِّئَاتِي مِنْ بَعْدِكُمْ زَمَانٌ: قَلِيلٌ فَقَهَاؤُهُ، كَثِيرٌ خُطْبَاؤُهُ».

“Indeed you are in a time, where its people of understanding are many and its speakers are few. And there will come a time after you, where its people of understanding are little and its speakers are many.”⁽⁹⁾

The position of the scholars and their status

The legislation (religion) has given scholars an elevated station and has established them as evidence for people regarding the rulings of Allah. So obedience to them being obligated, depending on the obedience of Allah and His messenger, the proofs (for this) are many.

From them:

1 - Allah the Most High said:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا
الرَّسُولَ وَأُولِيَ الْأَمْرِ مِنْكُمْ﴾

(9) Al-Adab Al-Mufrad by Al-Bukhari, No. (789), and Al-Albani said: Mawqouf (said by a companion), with an authentic chain of narration. It was authenticated by Ibn Hajar in Al-Fath

“O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the messenger and those placed in authority over you.”⁽¹⁰⁾

Ibn Kathīr said:

«الظاهرُ واللهُ أعلمُ أنها عامَّةٌ في كلِّ أُولي الأمر من الأمراء والعلماء».

“What’s apparent and Allah knows best, is that it is general regarding every leader from the rulers and scholars.”⁽¹¹⁾

2 - And Allah ﷻ said:

﴿فَسْأَلُوا أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“Ask the people of dhikr (knowledge) if you don’t know..”⁽¹²⁾

3 - And He ﷻ said:

﴿قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ﴾

“Are the people who know equal to the people who do not know.”⁽¹³⁾

(10) Surah An-Nissa - Verse: 59

(11) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (1/518)

(12) Surah Al-Anbiya’ - Verse: 7

(13) Surah Az-Zumar - Verse: 9

4 - And He ﷺ said:

﴿إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ﴾

“Indeed, it is only those who have knowledge among His slaves that fear Allah.”⁽¹⁴⁾

5 - The people of knowledge are the most insightful of the people about evil and the doorways of evil.

6 - The people of knowledge are the inheritors of the prophets and they are the preferred and distinguished people after the prophets over all other people.

7 - Indeed Allah intends good for them as in the Hadeeth:

«من يرد الله به خيرا يفقهه في الدين».

“Whoever Allah intends good for, He gives them understanding of the religion.”⁽¹⁵⁾

Since this is the status of the scholars, several points must be noted:

(14) Surah Fatir - Verse: 28

(15) Agreed upon: Narrated by Al-Bukhari, No. (71), and Muslim, No. (1037).

A - The existence of this status among scholars does not mean sanctifying them or their personalities so that we become like the children of Israel.

Allah ﷻ says

﴿اتَّخَذُوا أَحْبَارَهُمْ وَرُهْبَانَهُمْ أَرْبَابًا مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ﴾

“They took their monks and rabbis as lords besides Allah.”⁽¹⁶⁾

Rather, the people of truth are moderate. (Imam ash-Shatbi mentions).

«فقد حفظوا لأهل العلم أقدارهم، وأنهم غير معصومين من الخطأ، وإنما طاعتهم تجب باعتبار أنهم طريقٌ لطاعة الله ورسوله، ولذلك ثبت عن أئمتنا أنهم صرّحوا لأتباعهم أنه إذا ظهر أن أقوالهم بخلاف الشريعة لم تكن لهم طاعة».

“They have preserved the status of scholars, along with them not being infallible from error, and obedience to them is only obligatory, because they are a path to obedience to Allah and His Messenger. This is why it has been proven that our imams declared to their followers that if their words appear to contradict the Shari’a, then there is no obedience to them.”⁽¹⁷⁾

(16) Surah At-Tawbah - Verse: 31

(17) Al-Shatibi in Al-I’tisam (862/2).

Abu Hanifah said:

«إِذَا صَحَّ الْحَدِيثُ فَهُوَ مَذْهَبِي».

“If the Hadeeth is authentic, then it is my madhab (way).”⁽¹⁸⁾

And Malik said:

«إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ أٌخْطِئُ وَأُصِيبُ، فَانْظُرُوا فِي رَأْيِي، فَكُلُّ مَا وَافَقَ الْكِتَابَ وَالسُّنَّةَ فَخُذُوهُ، وَإِلَّا فَاتْرَكُوهُ».

“I am only a human; I am mistaken (at times) and correct (other times). So look at my opinion and whatever agrees with the Book (Quran) and sunnah, then take it and whatever does not, leave it.”⁽¹⁹⁾

And ash-Shafiee’ said:

«مَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ إِلَّا وَقَدْ تَذَهَّبَ عَلَيْهِ سُنَّةٌ لِرَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ فَمَهْمَا قُلْتُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ أَوْ أَصَلْتُ مِنْ أَصْلٍ فِيهِ عَنْ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ ﷺ خِلَافُ مَا قُلْتُ فَالْقَوْلُ مَا قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ وَهُوَ قَوْلِي».

“There is not one person except a sunnah of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ escapes him. So whatever I have

(18) Ibn Abidin in Al-Hashiyah (6/293).

(19) Ibn Abdel-Barr (2/32).

said from statements or formulated as a principle where something contrary to my view exists on the authority of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ, then the correct view is what the Messenger of Allah (Peace Be Upon him) has said, and it is my view.”⁽²⁰⁾

And Ahmad bin Hanbal said:

«رَأْيِي الْأَوْزَاعِيُّ وَرَأْيِي مَالِكٌ، وَرَأْيِي أَبِي حَنِيفَةَ كُلُّهُ رَأْيِي، وَهُوَ عِنْدِي سَوَاءٌ، وَإِنَّمَا الْحُجَّةُ فِي الْآثَارِ».

“The opinion of al-Awzaa’i and the opinion of Maalik and the opinion of Abu Haneefah, are just opinions and are all the same with me. And the proofs are only in the narrations.”⁽²¹⁾

And Ibn Al-Qayyim said:

«قَوْلُ الْمُجْتَهِدِينَ لَا يَجِبُ اتِّبَاعُهَا وَلَا يُكْفَرُ وَلَا يُفْسَقُ مَنْ خَالَفَهَا، فَإِنَّ أَصْحَابَهَا لَمْ يَقُولُوا هَذَا حُكْمُ اللَّهِ رَسُولُهُ، بَلْ قَالُوا اجْتَهِدْنَا بِرَأْيِنَا، فَمَنْ شَاءَ قَبْلَهُ وَمَنْ شَاءَ لَمْ يَقْبَلْهُ..».

“The statements of the scholars that make deductive conclusions, it is not obligatory to follow their statements,

(20) Ibn Al-Qayyim: «I’lam Al-mowaqi’een» (2/363).

(21) Ibn Abdel-Barr (2/149).

nor does one declare another to be a disbeliever or a sinner for opposing their statements. For indeed those scholars did not say this is the ruling of Allah and His messenger. Rather they said we strived to reach deductive conclusions with our opinions, so, whoever wishes to accept (may do so) and who wishes not to (may do so).”(22)

B - Indeed taking from the scholars, it's not limited to merely just the knowledge and the affairs of knowledge, rather it is taking from their manners, etiquettes and practical application. And this is not possible except by sticking with them and sitting with them.

So after knowing the views of the people regarding the scholars and the importance of this subject and after we have familiarized ourselves with who the scholars are that we intend and how we are to know the scholars from those who are not and what the status and place of the scholars are, what remains is for us to know the principles of dealing with the scholars.



(22) Ibn Al-Qayyim: «The Spirit» (276).

The Principles of Dealing with the Scholars

1- Supporting and showing loyalty to the scholars and loving them: They are the foremost people to be supported and most worthy of being loved for Allah's sake after the prophets.

Shaykh Al-Islam said:

«يجبُ على المسلمين بعد موالاة الله تعالى ورسوله ﷺ موالاة المؤمنين خصوصاً العلماء الذين هم ورثة الأنبياء...».

“It is obligatory upon the Muslims, after the support and loyalty of Allah ﷻ and His messenger ﷺ, to support the believers, particularly the scholars who are the inheritors of the prophets...”⁽²³⁾

And having support and loyalty of the scholars does not mean that a scholar is made the point of loving and hating,

(23) Ibn Taymiyyah: “Raf’oul Malam” (11).

therefore a student aids his teacher and has fanaticism to his words and make them the truth, therefore he supports matters on this basis and he hates the one who is against it. This indeed is only done for the messenger of Allah.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

«من نَصَّبَ شخصا كائناً مَنْ كَانَ، فوالى وعادى على موافقته في القول والفعل فهو من الذين فرَّقوا دينَهُم وكانوا شيعاً».

“Whoever appoints an individual, whoever it may be, thereby loving and hating upon agreeing with him in statement and action, then he is from those who have divided the religion and have become parties.”⁽²⁴⁾

2 - Respecting the scholars and recognizing them. In the Hadeeth:

The prophet ﷺ said:

«لَيْسَ مِنَّا مَنْ لَمْ يَرْحَمْ صَغِيرَنَا وَيُوقِّرْ كَبِيرَنَا، وَيَعْرِفْ لِعَالِمِنَا حَقَّهُ».

(24) Ibn Taymiyyah: “Al-Fatawah” (8/20).

“He is not from us, who does not show mercy to our young and respect our elders and knows the value of our scholars.”⁽²⁵⁾

And Tāwoos bin Kisaan said:

«مِن السُّنَّةِ أَنْ يُوقَّرَ أَرْبَعَةٌ: الْعَالِمُ، وَذُو الشَّيْبَةِ وَالسُّلْطَانُ، وَالْوَالِدُ».

“And from the sunnah is that four (individuals) are revered: the scholar, the gray-haired man, the ruler, and the father.”⁽²⁶⁾

And like this, was Ibn ‘Abbas رضي الله عنه, despite his majesty, he held the stirrup (of the mule) of Zaid Ibn Thabit and he said:

«هَكَذَا أُمِّرْنَا أَنْ نَفْعَلَ بِعِلْمَائِنَا وَكِبَرَائِنَا».

“This is how we were ordered to deal with our scholars and our great ones.”⁽²⁷⁾

And Imam Muslim came to Imam Al-Bukhari and kissed him between his two eyes and said:

«دَعْنِي حَتَّى أَقْبَلَ رَجُلِيكَ يَا أَسْتَاذَ الْأَسْتَادِينَ، وَسَيِّدَ الْمُحَدِّثِينَ، وَطَبِيبَ الْحَدِيثِ فِي عِلَلِهِ».

(25) Sunan al-Tirmidhi (1919) and Musnad Ahmad, and there are other narrations that support it.

(26) Al-Baghawi in Sharh Al-Sunnah (13/43).

(27) Al-Hakim, and Ibn Abdul-Barr (1/228).

“Allow me to kiss your two feet, O teacher of the teachers, master of the narrators of Hadeeth, and doctor of the Hadeeth in its defects.”⁽²⁸⁾

3 - To take (knowledge) from the scholars and seek a way to them.

Abdur-Rahman Ibn Mahdi said:

«كَانَ الرَّجُلُ مِنْ أَهْلِ الْعِلْمِ إِذَا لَقِيَ مَنْ هُوَ فَوْقَهُ فِي الْعِلْمِ فَهُوَ يَوْمٌ غَنِيْمَتُهُ سَأَلَهُ وَتَعَلَّمَ مِنْهُ وَإِذَا لَقِيَ مَنْ هُوَ دُونَهُ فِي الْعِلْمِ عِلْمُهُ وَتَوَاضَعَ لَهُ وَإِذَا لَقِيَ مَنْ هُوَ مِثْلُهُ فِي الْعِلْمِ ذَاكِرَهُ وَدَارِسَهُ».

“If a man from the people of knowledge met someone who was above him in knowledge, then it was his day of gain; he would ask him and learn from him. And if he met someone who was less than him in knowledge, he would teach him and be humble towards him. And if he met someone who was similar to him in knowledge he would review and study with him.”⁽²⁹⁾

(28) Ibn Katheer mentioned it in Al-Bidayah wa Al-Nihayah (11/340).

(29) Narrated by Al-Ramhurmuzi in Al-Muhaddith Al-Fasil (p. 206).

And Abu Ad-Dardaa رضي عنه said:

«مِنْ فَقِهِ الرَّجُلُ مِمَّا شَهِدَ وَمَدَّخَلُهُ وَمُخْرَجُهُ مَعَ أَهْلِ الْعِلْمِ».

“A sign of a man’s understanding is to be in the company of people of knowledge, he walks with them and goes in and out with them.”⁽³⁰⁾

And Ibn Mas’ud رضي عنه said:

«لَوْ أَعْلَمْتُ أَحَدًا أَعْلَمُ مِنِّي بِكِتَابِ اللَّهِ، تُبَلِّغُهُ إِلَّا بِلَ رَكْبَتٍ إِلَيْهِ».

“If I knew of someone more knowledgeable of the Book of Allah than me and he is in a place that is reachable on a camel's back I would (definitely) go to him.”⁽³¹⁾

It was said to Abu-Haneefah رحمه الله :

«فِي مَسْجِدٍ كَذَا حَلْقَةٌ يَتَنَاضَرُونَ فِي الْفِقْهِ، قَالَ: أَلَهُمْ رَأْسٌ؟ قَالُوا لَا، قَالَ: لَا يَفْقَهُونَ أَبَدًا».

“In masjid such and such, there is a circle in which some people are debating about Fiqh (understanding)! He asked: “Do they have a head (teacher)?” They said: “No!”, He (then) said: “They will never gain understanding.”⁽³²⁾

(30) Ibn Abdil-Barr in Al-Jami’ (1/127).

(31) Agreed upon: Narrated by Al-Bukhari, No. (5002), and Muslim, No. (2463).

(32) Ibn Abde-Barr (1/139).

4 - Giving Attention to the levels of the scholars

Therefore knowledge has levels and the scholars (as well) have degrees and levels. So, it is a must for the student of knowledge to give attention and care to upholding the scholars at their levels and places.

Ibn ‘Aqeel رحمه الله said:

«ومن عجيب ما سمعته عن هؤلاء الأحداث الجُهَّال أنهم يقولون: أحمد ليس بفقيهٍ لكنَّه محدِّثٌ وقال: وهذا غاية الجهل لأن له اختيارات بناها على الأحاديث بناء لا يعرفه أكثرهم وربما زاد على كبارهم».

“And from the strangest of what I’ve heard regarding these young Ignorant ones saying: “(Imam) Ahmad is not a scholar of Fiqh, rather he is (only) a scholar of Hadeeth.” And he (Ibn Aqeel) said: “and this is the epitome of ignorance, because he (Ahmad) has vast options (in knowledge) which are based on the narrations, based on a foundation that most of them do not know and perhaps

he has excelled even over the most knowledgeable amongst them.”⁽³³⁾

Adh-Dhahabee said, commenting on this:

«أحسبهم يظنونه كان محدثا وبس ووالله لقد بلغ في الفقه خاصة رتبة الليث ومالك والشافعي ولكن الجاهل لا يعلم رتبة نفسه فكيف يعرف رتبة غيره».

“According to them, they assume he was only a scholar of Hadeeth, but by Allah, he reached in Fiqh particularly the same level of al-Layth, Maalik and Ash-Shaafi’ee. However, the ignorant person does not even know his own level, so how would he know the level of others.”⁽³⁴⁾

The things that take into account the levels of scholars:

Taking into account specialization. If one of the arts of knowledge, the scholar is good at, is more dominant (than any other art, meaning he specializes in it), then his words are taken into account more than any other person’s.

(33) Al-Dhahabi mentioned it in Al-Siar (11/321).

(34) Previous source.

Ash-Shaafi'ee رحمه الله said to Al-Imam Ahmed:

«أنتم أعلم بالحديث مني؛ فإذا صح عندكم الحديث فقولوا لنا حتى نأخذ به».

“You have better knowledge than me about Hadith. So, If the hadith is authentic to you, then tell us about it so that we hold fast to it.”⁽³⁵⁾

Among the things that take into account the levels of scholars: taking into account (their) age; The older the scholar gets, the more he increases in knowledge and experience.

Also, among the things that take into account the levels of scholars: taking care of the level of the imam and the scholar to whom the people of his time or country recognized knowledge, and who became an authority and a Mufti (issuer of religious verdicts) for the people.

And what is not part of caring for the levels of scholars: is taking knowledge from some of the young students of knowledge in a way that contradicts the view of senior scholars.

(35) Ibn Al-Qayyim: «I'lam Al-mawaqi'een» (2/325).

Also, it is not a matter of caring for the levels of scholars: preserving the rights of some junior scholars in a manner that is not reserved for others (who are considered to be) senior scholars.

5- Beware of defaming scholars:

Defaming scholars is one of the characteristics of people of innovation and misguidance, because it's an attack on the religion and the call the scholars carry, and this is what is meant by those who attack the predecessors of the Ummah and its scholars who followed them in righteousness.

Abu Zur'ah رحمته الله said:

«إذا رأيت الرجل ينتقص أحدًا من أصحاب رسول الله ﷺ فاعلم أنه زنديق».

“If you see a man belittling anyone from the Companions of the Messenger of Allah ﷺ then know (for sure) that he is a Zindeeq (heretic who claims Islam).”⁽³⁶⁾

(36) Ibn Hajar in Al-Issabah (1/10).

Al-Imam Ahmed رحمه الله said:

«إِذَا رَأَيْتَ الرَّجُلَ يَغْمِزُ حَمَّادَ بْنَ سَلَمَةَ فَاتَّهَمِهِ عَلَى الْإِسْلَامِ، فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ شَدِيداً عَلَى الْمُبْتَدِعَةِ».

“If you see a man winking in mockery at Hammad ibn Salamah, then you should question him about Islam (I.e: because such act contradicts true Islam), for he (Hammad) was harsh on the innovators.”⁽³⁷⁾

Abdullah ibn Al-Mubarak رحمه الله said:

«حَقٌّ عَلَى الْعَاقِلِ أَنْ لَا يَسْتَخَفَّ بِثَلَاثَةِ الْعُلَمَاءِ، وَالسَّلَاطِينِ، وَالْإِخْوَانِ، فَإِنَّهُ مَنْ اسْتَخَفَّ بِالْعُلَمَاءِ ذَهَبَتْ آخِرَتُهُ، وَمَنْ اسْتَخَفَّ بِالسَّلْطَانِ ذَهَبَتْ دُنْيَاهُ، وَمَنْ اسْتَخَفَّ بِالْإِخْوَانِ ذَهَبَتْ مَرْوَعَتُهُ».

“It is a right upon the intelligent person to not belittle three (categories of people): the scholars, the rulers and the brothers. Whoever belittles the scholars will lose his hereafter, whoever belittles the ruler will lose his worldly life and whoever belittles the brotherhood his chivalry will be lost.”⁽³⁸⁾

So, my brother, beware of mocking the scholars and

(37) Al-Dhahabi mentioned it in Al-Siar (7/450).

(38) Al-Dhahabi mentioned it in Al-Siar (17/251)

speaking ill of them, and beware of backbiting them, for backbiting them is greater than the backbiting of others.

Ibn ‘Asakir رحمه الله said:

«واعلم يا أخي أنَّ لحومَ العلماء مسمومة، وعادة الله في هتك أستار منتقصيهم معلومة، لأن الوقيعَةَ فيهم بما هم منه براءٌ أمرٌ عظيمٌ، والتناول لأعراضهم بالزور والافتراء مرتعٌ وخيمٌ».

“Indeed, you should know, O my brother, that the flesh of scholars is poisonous, and Allah’s method of revealing the secrets of those who slander them is well known because slandering them for what they are innocent of is a great matter and attacking their honor with falsehood and injustice is a grave matter.”⁽³⁹⁾

6 - Beware of accusing scholars of being wrong:

Scholars are men who make mistakes. However, there are two slippery slopes in accusing them of being wrong:

(39) Tabyeen Kadhīb Al-Muftarī “Explaining the lies of the slanderer” (p28).

1 - Either accusing them is incorrect, perhaps due to haste in making accusations, or due to ignorance of their condition.

2 - Or the scholar is wrongly judged by someone who is not a scholar, then this person bases his judgment of the scholar on ignorance.

No one is worthy to consider scholars to be wrong or mistaken except scholars like them. In fact, one scholar may deem another scholar wrong in an issue in which he was not mistaken due to confusion in this matter.

7 - Seeking excuses for scholars:

It is necessary to think positively of scholars and seek excuses for them.

Umar Ibn Al-Khattab رضي الله عنه said:

«لا تظن بكلمة خرجت من أخيك المسلم سوءاً، وأنت تجد لها في الخير محملاً».

“Do not think badly of a word uttered by your Muslim brother when you find a good interpretation for it.”⁽⁴⁰⁾

Muhammad Ibn Sirin رحمه الله said:

«إذا بلغك عن أخيك شيءٌ فالتمس له عذراً، فإن لم تجد، فقل: لعلَّ له عُذراً».

“If you hear something (bad) about your brother, seek an excuse for him, but if you couldn’t find one, then say: “Perhaps he has an excuse.”⁽⁴¹⁾

As-Subki رحمه الله said:

«فإذا كان الرجل ثقةً مشهوداً له بالإيمان والاستقامة فلا ينبغي أن يُحمَل كلامه على غير ما تُعوَد منه، بل ينبغي التأويل وحسن الظنَّ الواجب به وبأمثاله».

“If the man is trustworthy and known for his faith and uprightness, then his words should not be interpreted in a manner other than what is accustomed of (being heard from) him. Rather, (his words) must be well interpreted and with good thought of him which is one of the duties towards him and those who are like him.”⁽⁴²⁾

(40) Tafsir Ibn Kathir (4/213).

(41) Al-Asbahani (97).

(42) Qaidat al-Jarh wa al-Ta’dhil by Al-Subki (p. 93).

8 - Going back to the people of knowledge and taking their opinions as a reference, especially in times of turmoil:

During (times of) turmoils, matters (that are different) look alike, confusion increases, and thoughts and minds become distorted. At that time, it is a must for the people to take the opinion of scholars and follow their words.

Allah Almighty said:

﴿وَإِذَا جَاءَهُمْ أَمْرٌ مِّنَ الْأَمْنِ أَوْ الْخَوْفِ أَذَاعُوا بِهِ ۖ وَلَوْ رَدُّوهُ إِلَى الرَّسُولِ وَإِلَى أُولِي الْأَمْرِ مِنْهُمْ لَعَلِمَهُ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَنْبِطُونَهُ مِنْهُمْ ۚ﴾

“And when there comes to them information about [public] security or fear, they spread it around. But if they had referred it back to the Messenger or to those of authority among them, then the ones who [can] draw correct conclusions from it would have known about it.”⁽⁴³⁾

(43) Surah An-Nisa - Verse: 83

9- There is not a single person except that he is criticized, so you must verify:

No one from this nation stands out without being criticized. Therefore, a group of people glorifies him and corrects him, while another group degrades him and makes him wrong.

Adh-Dhahabi رحمه الله said in As-Siar:

«ما من إمامٍ كاملٍ في الخير إلا وثمَّ أناسٌ من جهلة المسلمين ومبتدعيهم يذمُّونه، وما من رأسٍ في التَّجَهُّم والرَّفْض إلا وله أناسٌ ينتصرون له ويذبُّون عنه».

“There is no Imam who is complete in goodness except that there are some ignorant people and innovators among Muslims who dishonor him; and there is no leader of Tajahoum and Rafd (meaning that he is a caller to these two deviant sects: Al-Jahmiyyah and Al-Rafidah) except that he has some people who support and defend him.”⁽⁴⁴⁾

(44) Al-Dhahabi mentioned it in Al-Siar (14/344).

Satisfying all people is an unattainable goal, and no one is safe from criticism and blame. So verification is a must.

Ash-Shaafi'ee رحمته said:

«ليس إلى السلامة من الناس سبيلٌ، فانظر الذي فيه صلاحك فالزمه».

“There is no way to be safe from people, so look at what is in your best interests and adhere to it.”⁽⁴⁵⁾

For indeed verification is proof of the piety of a person and his fear of Allah.

10 - The scholars are not without mistakes but their mistakes are little in comparison to the many virtues they have:

Therefore the scholars of this nation (of prophet Muhammad) are (from) the best of it.

(45) Al-Bayhaqi in Al-Shafi'i's Etiquette (278-279), and Al-Dhahabi in Al-Siyar (10/42) and (10/89).

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

«كُلُّ أُمَّةٍ قَبْلَ مَبْعَثِ نَبِيِّهَا مُحَمَّدٍ ﷺ فَعَلِمَاؤُهَا شَرَّارُهَا، إِلَّا الْمُسْلِمِينَ، فَإِنْ عُلَمَاءُهَا خَيْرُهُمْ، فَإِنَّهُمْ خُلَفَاءُ الرَّسُولِ فِي أُمَّتِهِ، وَالْمَحْيُونَ لَمَّا مَاتَ مِنْ سُنَّتِهِ».

“Every nation before the sending of our prophet Muhammad ﷺ, had scholars who were the most evil of its people, except the Muslims, for indeed their scholars are the best of them. They are the successors of the messenger amongst his nation and from those who give life to that which has died from his sunnah.”⁽⁴⁶⁾

So with this being the case regarding them, indeed it is a must to overlook and pardon their little mistakes in comparison to their often correctness.

Sa’eed ibn al-Musayyib said:

«لَيْسَ مِنْ عَالِمٍ وَلَا شَرِيفٍ وَلَا ذِي فَضْلٍ إِلَّا وَفِيهِ عَيْبٌ، وَلَكِنْ مَنْ كَانَ فَضْلُهُ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ نَقْصِهِ، ذَهَبَ نَقْصُهُ لِفَضْلِهِ».

“There is not a scholar, a noble one, or virtuous one, except that he has a deficiency. But, whoever’s virtue outweighs his deficiency, then the virtue is given preference.”⁽⁴⁷⁾

(46) Ibn Taymiyyah: “Ra’foul Malam” (11-12).

(47) Ibn Abdil-Barr in Al-Jami’ (2/48).

And adh-Dahabi رحمه الله said:

«وَنَحِبُّ السُّنَّةَ وَأَهْلَهَا، وَنَحِبُّ الْعَالِمَ عَلَى مَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْإِتِّبَاعِ وَالصِّفَاتِ الْحَمِيدَةِ، وَلَا نَحِبُّ مَا ابْتَدَعَ فِيهِ بِتَأْوِيلٍ سَائِعٍ، وَإِنَّمَا الْعِبْرَةُ بِكَثْرَةِ الْمَحَاسِنِ».

“We love the sunnah and its people and we love the scholar for what he has of following (the sunnah) and praiseworthy characteristics. We do not love what he produced of innovation due to a justified interpretation, however, the only thing which should be considered is the abundance of good qualities.”⁽⁴⁸⁾

11 - Beware of the slips of the Scholars:

The scholars are not free from error and slips. The Messenger of Allah ﷺ said:

«كُلُّ بَنِي آدَمَ خَطَّاءٌ وَخَيْرُ الْخَطَّائِينَ التَّوَّابُونَ».

(48) Al-Siyar (20/46)

“All of the children of Adam make (many) mistakes and the best of those who make mistakes are those who repent.”⁽⁴⁹⁾

And Shaykh al-Islam said:

«فأما الصديقون والشهداء والصالحون فليسوا بمعصومين، وهذا في الذنوب المحققة، وأما ما اجتهدوا فيه فتارة يصيبون، وتارة يخطئون، فإذا اجتهدوا وأصابوا فلهم أجران، وإذا اجتهدوا وأخطأوا فلهم أجرٌ على اجتهداهم، وخطوهم مغفورٌ لهم».

“As for the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous, they were not infallible and this is regarding actual sins. As for that which they made deductive conclusions, then, sometimes they were correct and at other times they were incorrect. So if they made deductive conclusions, and they were correct, they will receive two rewards; and if they made deductive conclusions and erred, then they will receive one reward for striving (to reach the truth), and their mistake is pardoned.”⁽⁵⁰⁾



(49) Sunan Ibn Majah and Al-Hakim and Shaykh Al-Albani declared it good.

(50) Al-Fatawah (35/69).

What is the correct position in dealing with the slip of a scholar?

First: That slip shouldn't be relied on or accepted because it came in opposition to the legislation.

Ash-Shatibee said:

«إِنَّ زَلَّةَ الْعَالِمِ لَا يَصُحُّ اعْتِمَادُهَا مِنْ جِهَةٍ، وَلَا الْأَخْذُ بِهَا تَقْلِيداً لَهُ، وَذَلِكَ لِأَنَّهَا مَوْضُوعَةٌ عَلَى الْمَخَالَفَةِ لِلشَّرْعِ؛ وَلِذَلِكَ عُدَّتْ زَلَّةٌ، وَإِلَّا فَلَوْ كَانَتْ مَعْتَدَةً بِهَا لَمْ يُجْعَلْ لَهَا هَذِهِ الرِّتْبَةُ، وَلَا نُسَبَّ إِلَى صَاحِبِهَا الزَّلُّ فِيهَا».

“It is neither right to rely on the scholar’s slip from one side nor to accept it as a blind following of him (on the other side) because it is produced as a violation of Sharia law, That’s why it is considered to be a slip. Otherwise, if it were taken into account, it would not be given this rank, and slipping would not be attributed to the one who made it.”⁽⁵¹⁾

(51) Al-Muwafaqat (4/170).

Al-Awza'i رحمه الله said:

«مَنْ أَخَذَ بِنَوَادِرِ الْعُلَمَاءِ خَرَجَ مِنَ الْإِسْلَامِ».

“Whoever follows unusual and rejected opinions of scholars (based on his desires) has left the fold of Islam.”⁽⁵²⁾

TN: meaning: “Whoever takes and accepts the slips (and mistakes) of every scholar, would gather within him all evil.”

Second: Justice in judging the person who made (the slip): he should neither be accused of negligence nor dispraised because of it, and the rest of his statements and opinions are not rejected because of it.

Ibn al-Qayyim رحمه الله said:

«إِنَّ الرَّجُلَ الْجَلِيلَ الَّذِي لَهُ فِي الْإِسْلَامِ قَدَمٌ صَالِحٌ وَآثَارٌ حَسَنٌ، قَدْ تَكُونُ مِنْهُ الْهَفْوَةُ وَالزَّلَّةُ هُوَ فِيهَا مَعْذُورٌ، بَلْ وَمَأْجُورٌ لاجتهاده، فَلَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ فِيهَا، وَلَا يَجُوزُ أَنْ تُهْدَرَ مَكَانَتُهُ وَمَنْزِلَتُهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُسْلِمِينَ».

“A lapse or slip may have been committed by an honorable man who has a good precedence and good traces in Islam, for which he is excused, and rather rewarded for

(52) Al-Dhahabi mentioned it in Al-Siar (7/125).

his Ijtihad (diligence), so it is not permissible to follow him in it, and it is not permissible to let his position and status in the hearts of Muslims to be dropped..”⁽⁵³⁾

And if this scholar’s slip does not affect people, then, it is necessary to cover it up so that he may rectify it.

**12 - The words of (Aqraan) peers
(testifying) against each other are to
be ignored and should not be narrated.**

The sayings of some scholars about each other may be due to some kind of desire or intolerance.

Ibn Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, said:

«استمعوا علم العلماء، ولا تصدّقوا بعضهم على بعض».

“Listen to the knowledge of scholars, and do not believe what some of them say about others.”⁽⁵⁴⁾

(53) I’lam Al-mowaqi’een (3/295).

(54) Ibn Abdul-Barr in Al-Jami’ (2/151).

Al-Dhahabi رحمه الله said:

«كلامُ الأقران إذا تبرهنَ أنَّه بهوى وعصبيةٍ، لا يُلتفتُ إليه، بل يطوى ولا يُروى».

“If the speech of peers is proven to be whimsical and intolerant, it should not be paid attention to, rather it should be folded up (disregarded) and not narrated.”⁽⁵⁵⁾

He also said:

«وكلامُ الأقران بعضهم في بعضٍ لا يُعبأ به، لا سيما إذا لاح لك أنه لعداوةٍ أو لمذهبٍ أو لحسدٍ، وما ينجو منه إلا مَنْ عصمه الله».

“And the words of peers about each other should not be taken into account, especially if it appears to you that it is due to enmity or (following a certain) madhhab, or because of envy. And only those whom Allah protects are saved from it.”⁽⁵⁶⁾

As for the reasons of the speech of scholars about other scholars:

1- The presence of competition in a (particular) country or knowledge specialization.

(55) Al-Sir (10/92-94).

(56) Mizan al-Itidal (1/111).

2 - Severe anger

3 - Difference in jurisprudence

4 - The presence of hatred and hostility

As for the praise of the scholars for one another then much is an indication that they are from the people of justice and fairness, even if they differ in some affairs.

13 - Justice in judging scholars of ijtihād (an effort to reach the truth)

From some of the principles:

1 - The scholar of ijtihād is rewarded and not blamed:

As in the Hadeeth:

«إِذَا حَكَمَ الْحَاكِمُ، فَاجْتَهَدَ، ثُمَّ أَصَابَ، فَلَهُ أَجْرَانِ. وَإِذَا حَكَمَ، فَاجْتَهَدَ، ثُمَّ أَخْطَأَ، فَلَهُ أَجْرٌ».

“When a judge gives a ruling, having tried his best to decide correctly, and is right (in his decision), he will have

a double reward; and when he gives a ruling having tried his best to decide correctly and is wrong (in his decision), he will have a single reward.”⁽⁵⁷⁾

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

«مذهب أهل السنة أنه لا إثم على من اجتهد، وإن أخطأ».

“The doctrine of the people of the sunnah is that there is no sin upon the scholar who tries his best to reach a correct ruling but errs.”⁽⁵⁸⁾

2 - The differing between the scholars is something destined, which can not be avoided.

Ibn Taymiyyah said:

«وكانوا يتناظرون في المسألة مناظرة مشاورة ومناصحة، وربما اختلف قولهم في المسألة العلمية والعملية مع بقاء الألفة والعصمة وأخوة الدين، نعم من خالف الكتاب المستبين، والسنة المستفيضة أو ما أجمع عليه سلف الأمة خلافاً، لا يُعذر فيه، فهذا يعامل به أهل البدع».

“They would debate about issues to consult and advise and

(57) Agreed upon: Narrated by Al-Bukhari, No. (7352) and Muslim, No. (1716).

(58) Al-Fatwabs (19/123).

perhaps their views would differ in a knowledge or action-based issue while maintaining affection, togetherness and religious brotherhood. Whoever opposed the clear book (Quran) and the extensive Sunnah or what the Salaf of this ummah agreed upon, is not excused and this is the way the people of innovation are dealt with.”⁽⁵⁹⁾

3- The difference of opinion among the scholars of Ijtihaad regarding rulings (Ahkaam) has significant reasons, and it is not intentional or due to a certain desire or any other reason.

4- The basis upon which the difference of opinion is returned and the truth is known from falsehood is the Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the righteous predecessors. And it is based on this principle that no ijtihaad is accepted regarding what has been proven with conclusive significance and solid proof.

5- Infallibility does not belong to anyone after the Prophet ﷺ. Imam Malik’s saying about this is well-known, narrated by Adh-Dhahabi in Al-Siar (8/93) ⁽⁶⁰⁾



(59) Al-Fatwahs (24/172).

(60) “Everyone’s opinion may be accepted or rejected except for the person in this grave,” pointing to the grave of the Prophet ﷺ

14 - Refraining from taking the initiative to object to scholars:

The student of knowledge must consider his opinion more likely incorrect, before the opinion of eminent scholars, and he should not hasten to object (to anything) before he has confirmed it.

Ibn Hajar said in his explanation of the hadiths about the peace treaty of Al-Hudaybiyyah and the objection of some of the Companions to the terms of the peace treaty:

«التابع لا يليق به الاعتراض على المتبوع بمجرد ما يظهر في الحال، بل عليه التسليم؛ لأن المتبوع أعرف بمآل الأمور غالباً بكثرة التجربة».

“It is not appropriate for the follower to object to the person who is followed due to what appears (to him) at first. Rather, he must submit, because the person being followed is often more knowledgeable about the outcome of matters through extensive experience.”⁽⁶¹⁾

(61) Fath Al-Bari (5/352).

The danger of objecting to scholars becomes greater if the objector intends to put them down and belittle them, and what is meant with refraining from objecting to scholars is (only) in the subject of possibility and ijtiḥād, or if the objector lacks proof and investigation.

15 - Placing trust in the scholars:

The scholars may abandon some actions because of their consideration of the outcomes and consequences of matters, and to take into account benefits and harms. Did the Messenger of Allah abandon the killing of Abdullah bin Ubayy bin Abi Salul except out of consideration for the evil outcomes of matters? And did the Messenger of Allah refrain from building the ka'bah on the foundations of Ibrahim except for the fear that doing so would be a fitnah for his people who had recently converted to Islam?

It is necessary to place trust in the scholars and to know that they do not refrain from doing good except out of hope for the greater good or out of fear that a greater evil may occur.

